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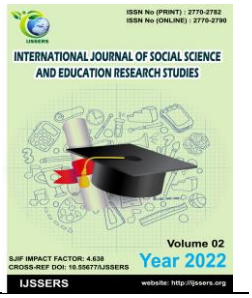

Bengali Women in Anti-British Movement (1857-1947): A Historical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Bengali women are commonly thought of as being defenseless. They must endure all the suffering while keeping their eyes closed since it is part of their religion. However, the setting is different in history. Bengali women have taken an active role in a number of movements and struggles. From the British era until the Pakistani period, Bengali women actively participated in a number of movements. Both men and women played important roles in the freedom struggle of that time in British history. This research looked at the engagement of Bengali women in historical movements during the British era (1857-1947). The illustrious history of Bengali women has been presented through primary data. The researchers have found that the female group was capable of playing a spectacular role in the national revolutionary struggle by actively taking part in important activities like planning the revolutionaries' escape or hiding or transporting weapons to the proper location.

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Keywords:

British, Women, Pakistan, Zamindar, Settlement, Company, Movement.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional rural society quickly disintegrated under British colonial rule. The early stages of Company rule involved brutal plunder of land and revenue. Lord Cornwallis's permanent settlement in 1793 created a middle class between landowners and commoners. The de facto Zamindars system is the endless exploitation and plunder of middlemen, lessees, and bureaucrats involved in levying land revenue on the commoner. Collecting fistfuls of fakir-monks who earn a living by begging is prohibited by the government. Despite being unprofitable for farmers, English indigo growers forced farmers to grow indigo instead of other crops for their commercial interests. As a result, widespread peasant discontent and rebellion arose. Among these were the Fakir-Sannyasi Rebellion (1770-1790), Shamser Ghazi Rebellion in Tripura District (1767-1768), Rangpur Peasant Rebellion (1783), Sandwip Peasant Rebellion (1769), Chakma Rebellion (1770-1787), Jessore-Khulna Peasant Rebellion. (1784-1796), Mymensingh Pagal Panthi Rebellion (1823-1833), Haji Shariatullah-Dudu Mia's Faraji Movement (1820-1857), Titumir's Peasant Rebellion (1827-1831), Nile Rebellion (1859-1860), Pabna Peasant Rebellion (1872) -1883), Barisal Peasant Revolt (1872-1875), The Partition of Bengal and the Abolition of Bengal Movement (1905-1911), Khilafat-Non-Cooperation Movement (1919-1922), The Quit India Movement of the British, Tevaga Movement (1946-1947) are particularly noteworthy. Peasant revolts mentioned earlier in the 20th century were local-level farmers' protest-resistance struggles. These rebellions were largely spontaneous. In the second decade of the 20th century, the first all-Bangla peasant revolt was organised. Women of Bengal participated in these movements as well as men. The participation of Bengali women in these anti-British movements has brightened the history of Bengal. So this article has analyzed the various aspects of Bengali women's participation in the anti-British movement.

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STUDY GAP IN THE RESEARCH FIELD

The involvement of Bengali women in the anti-British movement has not been investigated in any of the academics' published books or papers, leaving a gap in the study area. In other words, in the two volumes released on the involvement of Bengali women in the anti-British campaign, some topics have been irregularly covered from a broad viewpoint. We thus wrote this post after understanding the need to research Bengali women's involvement in the anti-British struggle.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

I have collected information from primary sources. I studied newspapers, periodicals, published books, and research articles. I also collected information from various political programmes aired on Bangladesh Betar, BTV, and BBC. Collected information by participating in various political meetings. I have gathered helpful information from Khwaja Yunus Ali, Dhaka, Rajshahi, and Jahangirnagar University Central Libraries, Barendra Research Museum Library, Bangladesh Public Library, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh Library, and Bangla Academy to learn more about the involvement of Bengali women in the anti-British movement.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to examine the role of Bengali women's society in different stages of the anti-British movement. Despite the positional weakness, exploitation, backwardness, disrespect, and deprivation in the society, the Bengali women's society participated in the movement by establishing various women's organizations under different political parties. Among the women who participated in the movement were school, college, and university students and ordinary progressive women of various levels. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the aspects of Bengali women's participation in various movements and struggles against the British government.

WOMEN OF BENGAL IN VARIOUS ANTI-BRITISH MOVEMENTS

Countless patriotic sons and daughters sacrificed their lives to free the country from the hands of the British during the British period. The defeat of Nawab Sirajuddaula in the Battle of Palashi and the victory of the British East India Company marked the beginning of British rule in India. In 1773 the British Parliament enacted the Regulating Act to establish a colonial power on a firmer footing. In 1793 Lord Cornwallis expanded this colonial governance structure by introducing the Permanent Settlement. This East-India Company was a commercial association. So profit was the objective of this company. At that time, the only means of profit for the company was land revenue. And to collect this revenue, the company perpetrated various atrocities on the farming community of Bengal. The result was public outrage against the company's unfair revenue collection. As a result of the anger, various movements were organised in Bengal. At every level of such an anti-British movement, the role of women and men was also glorious.[1]

Devi Chaudhurani of Rangpur was a fakir-monk leader of the movement, which was an expression of public anger against the unjust revenue collection of the East India Company in the early days of British rule.[2] Queen Shiromani of Kangarh was seen to play a significant role in the subsequent second Chuar Rebellion. Starting from the city, Chandrakona of Medinipur to Bakura, Dhalbhum, and Ghatshila, the Chua rebels basically abolished the English rule for two decades. While describing the extraordinary role of the poor girls of the village in this rebellion, the English District Magistrate of Bakura wrote in a letter in 1784 that before the soldiers with guns entered the village, the Chua rebels left the village and hid in the forest and mountains. In the dead of night, the village girls would deliver the news to the rebels who were hiding while avoiding being seen by the English soldiers. For the rebels to surprise and overwhelm the English soldiers, the females of this village provided the rebels with information on where the English army was, where they were going, etc. He also writes that their fiercely intelligent, rebellious faces were always hidden behind the veil. Despite hundreds of tortures, the secret hiding places of the rebels were not revealed from their faces.[3] In 1799, Rani Shiromani, the chief aide of Govardhan Sardar, the leader of the Chuar Rebellion, was arrested by the British forces and kept in Medinipur Jail. He died in captivity in 1812. As a result, the Chuar Rebellion subsided.[4]

The Wahhabi movement developed in Bengal when the English East India Company carried out cruel looting regarding land and revenue. In addition to men, women also participate in this movement. Titumir's mother, Ayesha Begum, participated in the Wahhabi movement. Ayesha Begum encouraged the educated women of Bengal to join in the movement. Even he encouraged the poor women of the village to participate in the Wahhabi movement against the British to teach the Persian language. All the women of Enayet Kha and Belayet Kha families participated in the Blue Rebellion. When Faraji leader Dudu Mia died, her mother organised the girls. He sheltered the rebels. Collected weapons and attended to the wounded. He organised the girls and encouraged them to participate in the rebellion against the British. When Haji Shariatullah was sentenced to life imprisonment, his mother said, *"My son fought for a just cause; I am proud of him."*[5] This statement can be said without a doubt that Haji Shariatullah's mother was a rebel leader.

At the end of the nineteenth century, women's awareness increased. Swarnakumari Devi (1885-1932) tried to promote swadeshi and self-reliance among women. She was the president of the women's wing of the Theosophical Society of Bengal.[6] When the women's unit of this society rose, he organised the Sakhi Samiti in 1886 with those women. This association taught women to learn education and to be self-reliant.[7] She was the first Indian woman to edit a magazine called Bharti, and she encouraged patriotism with the help of this magazine and the Sakhi Samiti.[8] Hiranmayi Devi (eldest daughter of Swarnakumari) established Widow Shilpashram in 1906, renamed Sakhi Samiti, and it continued to function after 1931.[9]

When the province of Bengal was bifurcated on October 15, 1905, under the direction of Lord Curzon, the great leader of India, Banganari's achievements were not less than the unprecedented response of the Swadeshi movement across Bengal and outside Bengal. At the beginning of the Swadeshi

movement, the women's society especially provided logistics for this movement. At this time, they gathered in their respective houses, villages, or villages and took the decision to promote the Swadeshi products and were bound by the pledge of banning foreign products. Kumudini Mitra's activities and sacrifices in this regard are memorable. At this time, he joined meetings and associations, wrote national anthems, and tried to inspire the people with nationalism. Lilavati Mitra, Nimla Sarkar, Subla Acharaj, and Hemangini Das were active in the Tat and Charka movements in their respective homes and villages and did their best to support the Swadeshi movement.[10]

On July 24, 1907, when Bhupendranath Dutt was convicted of propagating revolutionism in the Yugantar newspaper, the Bengali women's society protested against this conviction. Under the leadership of Lilavati Mitra, about two hundred women met in a protest meeting at No. 61 Harrison Road in Kolkata and congratulated Bhupendranath Dutta and his mother, Bhubaneswari Devi. At this time, some women of Barisal donated their savings to Swadesh Bandhab Samiti.[11]

Brakshan leader Krishnakumar Mitra, his wife Lilavati, and their daughter Kumudini Mitra believed in revolutionary methods, and in Parvati, they also protested against Krishnakumar Mitra's order of Dipankar. Sarojini Devi also participated in the revolutionary nationalism campaign in Barisal. Similarly, Vinodini Devi (sister of Jatindranath Mukhopadhyay of Yugantar Dal) and his brother and Radharani Devi (mother of Jivantara Haldar of Anushilan Dal) gave moral advice to her son.[12] Several Indians went abroad to get theoretical training from international revolutionaries to organise a revolution to liberate their homeland. Ambia Khan Luhani of Sirajganj, Bangladesh, is particularly noteworthy among them.[13]

From the year 1908-1909, the women's society was able to play a glorious role in the national revolutionary movement by directly participating in essential tasks such as sheltering the revolutionaries at home, hiding weapons or delivering them to the right place, confusing the police or arranging the escape of the revolutionaries. Among those who play an active role in these activities are Pratul Ganguli's mother (Sutrapur, Dhaka), Brakshamayi Sen (Bikrampur, Dhaka), Chinmayi Sen (Bikrampur, Dhaka), Soudamini Devi (Faridpur), Priyabala Dasgupta and Mrinalini Dasgupta (Faridpur). Barisal) etc., names are notable.[14]

Nanibala Devi (daughter of Suryakant Banerjee) of Bali in Howrah district indulged in a revolutionary conspiracy and sheltered leaders like Amarendranath Chattopadhyay, Ramchandra Majumdar, and disguising herself as the wife of Ramchandra Majumdar entered the jail and gave information about arms to the revolutionaries. The police in Parvati discovered that she was not Ramchandra Majumdar's wife. Nanibala Devi was arrested from Peshawar when she was sick and kept in the Kashmir Jail and as a State Prisoner under Regulation No. 3 of 1918 in the Presidency Jail of Calcutta. She was the only female state prisoner in Bangladesh.[15]

In response to the Rowlatt Bill and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and fueled by the Khilafat Movement, Gandhiji formally launched the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920. Women's participation in that mass movement was very significant. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar started to loosen the discipline of women. Later in Gandhiji's initiation, Bengali women were encouraged to work together with men in any work for the benefit of the nation.[16] In response to Gandhiji's call for this non-cooperation movement, apart from political activities such as Satyagraha and going to jail, the girls showed sympathy to the protestors by wearing foreign sarees and bangles, removing body jewelry, and cutting the wheel.[17] Ashalata Sen, Leela Roy in Dhaka, and Mohini Devi, Basanti Devi (wife of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das) in Calcutta became the focal point of the movement.[18] Besides, others who played an important role in the non-cooperation movement were Umiladevi (sister of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das). Hemprabha Majumdar, Sunitha Devi, Neli Sengupta, Jyotirmayi Ganguly, Sarlagupta, Daulatunnessa Sarojini Naidu, Radha Devi (wife of Lala Lajpat Roy), Renuka Roy Jaishri Raizee, Hansa Mehta, Perin Captain, Joshilaer captain, Lilavati Munshi, and Dave and Mahtre Sister, [19] Saralabala Dev (Sylhet), Prabha Chattopadhyay (Balur Ghat, Dinajpur), Sarajubala Sen (Bhola), Indumati Guhthakurta (Barisal), Sushila Mitra (Noakhali), Snehsheela Chowdhury (Khulna), Surma Mukhopadhyay (Badhaman), Vishnpriya Devi (Sirajganj), Usha Guha (Mymensingh), Prafulla Kumari Bose (Barisal), Manorama Bose, Charushila Roy,[20] The leading women actively participated in the non-cooperation movement and organise and sensitise the wider women society, each of them established Nari Mangal Samiti in their respective regions or activated previously established women's organizations and traveled from village to village and carried out the campaign of Swadeshi movement among women.[21] The students of Bethune College joined the general strike against the Simon Commission in 1928 when the revolutionary groups became involved in the anti-Simon Commission movement, protesting in front of the college despite their fear of being expelled. GM Wright, the college's principal, also joined the strike. The abuse caused the students to protest and protest. As a result, Principal Wright was forced to leave India. From this time, female students participated in the political movement can be observed.[22] Being attracted to the work of the revolutionary party, interested women were engaged in the work of various secret organizations, and they also participated in armed organizations. University women students like Shanti, Suniti, Veena Das, and Ujjwala Majumder attempted to kill the tyrannical governors, district magistrates, and police commissioners. Pritilata Waddedar and Kalpana Dutta directly participated in the looting of the Chittagong armory. Kamala Dasgupta, Banalata Sen, Jyotikana Dutt, Parul Mukhaji, Usha Mukhaji, Savitri Devi, Leela Nag, and

Indumati Singh risked their lives. They got involved in the terrorist activities of the revolutionary party.[23]

During the civil disobedience movement of 1930-1932, Daulatunnesa (Gaibandha) came in contact with the national leader Mahamaya Bhattachaj (Gaibandha) and joined the Swadeshi movement.[24] During the Ain Amanya movement of 1932, the Gaibandha Mahila Samiti was formed under the leadership of Mahamaya Bhattachaj. Under the leadership of this association, many women took part in processions, picketing, and the movement to disobey Article 144. During this movement, Daulatunnessa and Mahamaya, and Pratibha Sarkar were arrested and imprisoned in Rajshahi, Presidency, and Baharampur Jails. At that time, Daulatunnesa's relatives and peers Ziyaunnahar, Rakiba Khatun, Samsun Nahar, and Rokeya Khatun actively participated in the movement.[25]

Razia Khatun, Halima Khatun (Mymensingh), Samshun Necha Begum (mother of Gholam Jhilani of Dhaka), Roshan Ara Begum (wife of Gholam Jhilani of Dhaka), Raisa Banu Begum (wife of Asaf Ali Beg), Badrun Necha Begum (wife of Aktar Uddin Hossain Chowdhury of Dhaka), Phul Bahar Bibi (sister of Tamizuddin of Dhaka Bikrampur) actively participated in the civil disobedience movement with the inspiration of Satyagrahis and Congress leaders. Due to the movement, Phulbahar Bibi was sentenced to 6 months of rigorous imprisonment and kept in Dhaka and Baharampur jails.[26]

During the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, Leela Nag formed 'Dhaka Mahila Satyagraha Samiti' with women in Dhaka.[27] There were 80 different photographs and copies of Mahatmaji's speeches and letters with information on Gandhiji's Dandi campaign and his history, as well as violations of the salt law by people openly producing salt at meetings around the city. Women also disseminated the Satyagraha message using magic lanterns throughout the district. He pushed me to join the Satyagraha. Leading figures in managing this magic lantern were Renu Sen, Veena Roy, Shakuntala Chowdhury, and others.[28]

On March 22, 1930, Ashalata Sen and Sarma Gupta, along with their colleagues, organised the Satyagrahi Sevika Dal in Dhaka and were arrested and sentenced to prison, including Saryubala Gupta, Suniti Basu, Pratibha Sen, and others for conducting the civil disobedience movement and salt law disobedience movement.[29]

After 1931 school-college girls joined these two revolutionary groups, Prakash and Yugantar, and involved themselves in terrorist activities.[30] According to the decision of the party leaders, Mrs. Shanti Ghosh and Mrs. Suniti were arrested after they went to the magistrate's bungalow on December 14, 1931, and shot him dead on the pretext of meeting with a petition when the responsibility for the murder of Comilla District Magistrate Stevens was absolved. They were sentenced to life imprisonment by the Kolkata Special Tribunal as young adults.[31]

After the incident of Comilla, within two months, the women of Calcutta carried out revolutionary activities. On February 6, 1932, at the convocation ceremony of Calcutta University, while sitting as the chancellor, Veena Das, a B.A. holder, shot at Stanley Jackson and narrowly missed his target. Meanwhile, Veena Das was arrested and sentenced to nine years of rigorous imprisonment in a direct trial.[32] Following this occurrence, several women were imprisoned without charge or trial because they were participating in revolutionary activities. Some women were also arrested and punished while engaging in these activities. They included Shovarani Dutta, Bimala Pratibha Devi, Maya Devi, Jyatikana Das, Banalata Das, Renuka Sen, Prafulla Braksha, Shanti Sudha Ghose, and Kamala Chattopadhyay.[33]

On January 14, 1932, twenty-three-year-old Pritilata Waddedar played a brave role in saving Surja Sen's life and bringing him to a safe place despite the gunfire of the British forces. On September 24, 1932, he successfully attacked Chittagong European Club with six other colleagues and was seriously injured and committed suicide by consuming potassium cyanide to avoid being caught by the police. And though his comrades returned unharmed to Masterda Surja Sen, Sufalkam Pritilata sacrificed herself to death.[34]

After Pritilata's death, her partner Kalpana Dutta was imprisoned in 1933 in connection with the Chittagong Armory looting case. Ujjwala Majumdar, a member of the armed party, was sentenced to armed imprisonment for life on charges of gunning down the then Governor General of Bengal, Sir Anderson, at Lebong Rescoce on May 8, 1934, and for possession of firearms.[35]

Savitri Devi (widow of Navin Chakraborty of Chittagong) was sentenced to 4 years of rigorous imprisonment for harboring revolutionary hero Surja Sen and his comrades. Even after being released, Savitri Devi was not spared from the hands of the police, and she had to suffer a lot of pain and torture. Unwavering respect for the master is the only path to his morale.[36]

Indumati Singh (one of the revolutionary leaders of the Chittagong armory looting, at least Singh's sister) traveled to different places in Bangladesh and even India to collect money for the case of the revolutionaries caught in the looting of the armory. Despite going to Lalbazar, Kolkata, the central police station, this courageous woman inspired the police. He collected money from nearby, and in December 1931, when he went to Comilla to manage money, he was arrested by the police. Chandra Bani Devi (Dhiren Chakraborty's sister) and Rajalakshmi Devi (Dhiren Chakraborty's daughter-in-law), who were members of the revolutionary party, were sentenced to two years of armed imprisonment for harboring the great revolutionary Vinod Dutta.[37]

After the Bharat Char proposal, Arun Asaf Ali was one of the women who significantly impacted Bengali politics. On August 9, 1942, she joined the Bharat Char movement to avoid capture by the nation's police and the British government's arrest of her husband, Asaf Ali, a well-known lawyer and Congress leader. He traveled and delivered

energizing speeches to inflame anti-British feelings. He also concealed in an underground shelter from the start of 1945 until the end to evade capture.[38]

Kamala Das Gupta joined Gandhiji's Quit India Movement and toured the remote areas of Jessore, Khulna, Barisal, and other districts to incite the people in the anti-British movement and was arrested and imprisoned until 1942-1945. Ashalata Sen was arrested by the British government at one point during the movement and was sentenced to imprisonment for 8 months in 1943. Women, including Hemprabha Majumder were arrested in 1942 for participating in the last national movement.[39]

Rural women actively participated in Bengal's peasant movement during the British era. They displayed unwavering bravery and tenacity in controlling the movement, leading the resistance effort, and confronting the enemy. The Tonk, Nankar, and Tevaga movements, which began in various districts of West and East Bengal throughout the 1930s and 1940s, were significant advances in the campaign for independence from the British Raj and a resistance movement against the exploitation of landlords.[40]

Farmers reacted vehemently by establishing peasant groups with men and women as the zamindar, jotdars' terrorist dictatorship, and police torture continued to demolish the peasant community. For this reason, in addition to organizing their resistance groups (volunteer forces made up of Jhata and Barun, volunteer forces made up of Da and Cham Gain), the farmers stood by the men. They rang bells from houses and trees to warn other farmers of the enemy's approach. Above all, by overcoming all challenges and fighting in direct conflict with unending bravery, they have elevated the peasant revolt's history by laying down their lives.[41]

The women who gave leadership in this movement and gave a bright sign of bravery are Rasmoni (woman leader of Mymensingh Hajong Tongk rebellion, she formed her own resistance force), Deepsree Singh (Tevaga Andolan, Thakurgaon), Rohini, Jayamoni (two leaders of women's armed forces, Dinajpur), Bhandari (Rajbanshi women leader, Dinajpur), Yashoda Rani Sarkar (Dinajpur), Kaushalya Kamrani (Dinajpur), Surma Singh (Dinajpur)[42] Ma (mother of peasant rebel activist Baburi-Rangpur), Burima Punyeswari (royal widow, Sundar Dighi, Jalpaiguri), Kalyani Das Gupta (leader of Mahila Atramaksha Samiti), Shikha Nandi Tilak Tarini Devi (Tevaga Movement, Panchagarh), Sarlabala Pal (Narail, Jessore), Bimala Majhi (Medinipur), Ahalya, Uttami, Sarojini, Batasi (Chandan Pidi, Sundarbans),[43] Ila Mitra (Nachol, Chapainawabganj), [44] Deepti Roy Chowdhury, Bijli Prabha Gosmami, Sachirani Devi, Reba Roy Chowdhury, Mahasweta Devi, Begum Qayyum, Lakshni Barman, Dayamayi Barmani, Annapurna Devi, Madhavi Roy, Kharki Barmani, Rajbala Barmani, Mohini Barmani, Niroda Barmani, Rani Mukherjee are notable.[45]

CONCLUSION

When the British were in control, hundreds of brave youngsters gave their lives to escape the British's grasp and break the bonds of slavery. All of these anti-British movements included both men and women in active roles. Some women participated and set an example in the Fakir Sanyasi Rebellion, Chua Rebellion, Wahhabi Movement, French and Blue Rebellion struggles. At the end of the nineteenth century, women's awareness increased. Consequently, when Bengal was divided in 1905, the achievements of the women of Bengal were no less in the unprecedented response of the Swadeshi movement in and outside Bengal. In its early stages, the Swadeshi movement benefited greatly from the support of the women's community. They then assembled in their separate homes and communities and committed to supporting local products and avoiding foreign products. From 1908-1909, the women's society was able to play a glorious role in the national revolutionary movement by directly participating in significant tasks such as sheltering the revolutionaries at home, hiding weapons or delivering them to the right place, confusing the police or arranging the escape of the revolutionaries. In 1920, Gandhiji formally launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, culminating in the participation of women in the mass movement. In 1928, when revolutionary parties became active in the anti-Simon Commission movement, patriotic female students protested against the Simond Commission. Women have been active in political activities since this era. Many motivated women were drawn to the activities of the revolutionary party and took part in a number of secret groups, as well as armed revolutionary organizations. The university's female students attempted to assassinate the autocratic governor, deputy commissioner, and police commissioner. Women students risked their lives and got involved in the terrorist activities of the revolutionary party. When the peasant society was crushed by police torture, arrests, and the terrorist oppression of landlords and landlords, the peasant women and the men formed a peasant organization and strongly protested against it. For this reason, apart from building their resistance force, in order to strengthen the movement, they always courageously stood beside the men, rang the bell to inform the farmers of the arrival of the enemy, spontaneously joined various farmers' meetings, and above all, overcame all obstacles and engaged in direct struggle with infinite courage and sacrificed their lives. The history of rebellion has made significant.

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